

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

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P 301530 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9202

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN UR

SUBJ: ALASKA AIRLINES CHARTER FLIGHTS

1. THREE- MAN GROUP OF ALASKA AIRLINES OFFICIALS, LED BY VICE PRESIDENT PETERSON, VISITED MOSCOW MAY 27-29 ON URGENT BASIS TO DISCUSS POSSIBILITIES OF SALVAGING AT LEAST PORTION OF 1973 SUMMER CHARTER PROGRAM. DURING TWO DAYS OF MEETINGS, AEROFLOT DIRECTOR BESEDIN MET WITH GROUP FOR TWO FULL HOURS AND JOINED THEM FOR LUNCHEON FINAL DAY.

2. PETERSON CALLED EMBASSY LATE MAY 29 TO REPORT THAT AS RESULT OF MEETINGS AEROFLOT HAD FINALLY INDICATED IT WOULD NOT RPT NOT OBJECT TO PRESENT ALASKA PROPOSAL FOR ORGANIZING FOUR CHARTER FLIGHTS BEGINNING IN JULY AND LASTING INTO EARLY SEPTEMBER OF THIS YEAR. HOWEVE R, AEROFLOT TOLD ALASKA THAT FINAL AND OFFICIAL REPLY TO ITS PROPOSAL COULD ONLY BE GIVEN BY MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION ITSELF, AND THAT SUCH REPLY WOULD IN TURN HAVE TO AWAIT CONCLUSION OF BILATERAL CIVIL AIR NEGOTIATIONS NOW BEING HELD IN WASHINGTON AND EXPECTED TO END MAY 31.

3. PETERSON ALSO STATED THAT ALASKA HAD DISCUSSED PROSPECTS FOR 1974 CHARTER PROGRAM, AND HAD AGREED TO SOVIET REQUEST FOR JOINT PROGRAM WITH PARTICIPATION BY
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AEROFLOT. HE SAID THAT IF PARTIAL 1973 CHARTER PROGRAM SALVAGED, HE WOULD RETURN TO MOSCOW FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON 1974 PROGRAM IN EARLY AUGUST. HE ALSO STATED CATEGORICALLY, HOWEVER, THAT IF 1973 CHARTER FLIGHTS ARE NOT FINALLY PERMITTED ALASKA WOULD NO LONGER BE INTERESTED IN ANY SUBSEQUENT CHARTER FLIGHTS TO USSR AND WOULD DROP ALL PLANS FOR 1974 PROGRAM.

4. COMMENT: IT IS POSSIBLE THAT AS RESULT OF PERSONAL DISCUSSIONS WITH PETERSON, WHO WAS ARMED WITH VOLUMINOUS STATISTICS INDICATING THAT 70 PERCENT OF ALL CHARTER PROGRAM HARD CURRENCY REVENUES WOULD ACCRUE TO SOVIET UNION, AEROFLOT HAS NOW BACKED DOWN FROM PREVIOUS POSITION OF REFUSING ALL FLIGHTS AND IS WILLING TO GO ALONG WITH FOUR ALASKA NOW PROPOSES. HOWEVER, AEROFLOT'S RESPONSE TO PETERSON COMMITS THEM TO NOTHING, AND PERMITS EASY WAY OUT SHOULD NOTHING AFFECTING ALASKA'S CHARTER PROPOSAL FAVORABLY EMERGE FROM WASHINGTON TALKS.
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